

**NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD  
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***PRESS RELEASE***

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**NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD AND THE ACLU FILE A LAWSUIT  
AGAINST THE CITY OF BOSTON RESTRICTIONS ON FREE SPEECH**

**Boston, July 21, 2004** The Massachusetts Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild (“NLG”) and the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts (“ACLUM”) today filed a lawsuit in the federal district court on behalf of the public and members of the Bl(A)ck Tea Society, United for Peace With Justice and the Boston Coalition for Palestinian Rights against the City of Boston opposing the City’s unconstitutional attempts to confine and restrict demonstrators at the 2004 Democratic National Convention (“DNC”) to a claustrophobic and unsafe so-called “demonstration zone.” The lawsuit also opposes the City’s attempts to barricade and severely restrict access to the public streets in the entire area in front of the FleetCenter without any justification, and to prohibit groups from having literature tables in that area on the basis that the tables might be used as weapons. **Judge Woodlock will hear the case on Thursday, July 22, 2004, 10:00 am, Federal Courthouse, Rm 1, 3rd Fl.**

The City, in contravention to the numerous promises and representations made to the NLG and the ACLUM in numerous meetings held over the past year, has created a tightly confined pen as the only area near the DNC site at the FleetCenter where demonstrators will be allowed to assemble. The City had promised, as they were required to do by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, that they would provide an assembly area where demonstrators would be within clear sight and sound of DNC delegates and other attendees, be able to engage them in meaningful dialogue and be able to exchange leaflets and other political literature with them. The City promised to respect the fundamental rights of citizens to have a meaningful opportunity to try and influence the decisions and platform of one of the two major U. S. political parties at its national convention. Instead the City has constructed a tightly controlled pen, mostly located under MBTA overhead tracks and platforms, filled with obstructions, including buildings, girders and steel beams, surrounded by concrete jersey barriers topped with mesh-covered security fencing and overhead mesh netting, in which most of the people inside the site will be completely out of sight and sound of the DNC delegates. One worker installing the netting has described the site as looking like an “internment camp.”

This confined and dangerous site where demonstrators are required to congregate is antithetical to the Constitution and the American tradition of participatory democracy. In addition, the City is attempting to further restrict the opportunity to participate in the fundamental political process of choosing a presidential candidate by prohibiting literature tables to be in place near the FleetCenter and creating the atmosphere of a walled enclosure in the streets near the DNC. The actions of the City take a long step toward depriving our citizens of fundamental rights and liberties in the so-called name of "security." This lawsuit seeks to restore that balance and protect the rights of political participation, speech and assembly guaranteed by the Constitution.